CHAPTER TWELVE

In the week of the concert in the Postepowa Synagogue, the Kraków Philharmonic and I went to the Templ to begin our rehearsals. The Kraków musicians had been in and out of churches their entire lives, playing in the city's great Catholic spaces, Saints Peter and Paul, the Basilica of Saint Mary, and so many others. But before that first rehearsal, they stood outside the synagogue not knowing quite what they would find inside. This was 1990, long after the Shoah. These musicians, most of them, had never set foot inside a synagogue, as far as I could tell. Czeslaw Pilawski, the orchestra personnel manager and by now my friend, gathered them together on the street, and calmed their nerves.

When they finally went in and saw the beautiful interior of the Templ, they soon relaxed and began to play as if they immediately felt at ease making music in that sacred place. Our Beethoven, our Dvořák, felt as at home in the Postepowa Synagogue as they had in any of the churches in which we had made music so often. The Kraków Philharmonic went to work to make our Templ performance the very best it could be.

The night of the concert turned out to be a night of surprises. The first was that the synagogue and the entire area around it were cordoned off and guarded by large military vehicles. It's true that important diplomatic personages were attending: Israel's Ambassador to Poland, Mordechai Palzur, signaling a newly warming bilateral relationship; Thomas W. Simons, the United States Ambassador to

Poland; and Jan Majewski, the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister. But I am not sure that the security protocols required this kind of cordon sanitaire around the concert. To this day I don't know what kind of security threat was perceived, but it gave the event an otherworldly look.

The entire exterior of the synagogue was floodlit, and there were backlit armored personnel carriers and soldiers, not in riot gear but in combat gear with semiautomatic weapons at the ready, guarding every entrance to the sanctuary and all the streets immediately surrounding it. Certainly, I felt much more nervous on this occasion than I had felt that morning at the dress rehearsal. It was as if something very strange and very dangerous was taking place on the Ulica Miadowa that night.

Our concert program began with the playing of the three national anthems, those of Poland, the United States, and Israel. Everyone stood for all three. The playing of the first two was stirringly patriotic. Pride could be felt throughout the hall. The reaction to Hatikvah was heartrending. Here in this congregation-less Polish synagogue, desecrated in the Shoah, the song of a resurrected Israel rang out mournfully, strong and deep. I did all I could to keep from tearing up right there on the podium.

The symphonic music-making that evening was natural and unconstrained. Bruch's Kol Nidre and the Dvořák Cello Concerto, both with the wonderful young cellist Matt Haimovitz as soloist, and the Eroica Symphony of Beethoven were perfect for this concert. They were, after all, Central European music being performed in a nineteenth-century Central European Reform synagogue and thus were all of a piece with the culture of those who had once worshiped there: committed Poles of Jewish faith. This was their music, every bit as much as it was the Central European music of the Polish Catholic community. Our music was at home in this place.

One part of the evening's program was a rededication of the synagogue. It wasn't for us to sanctify it as a place of worship, but it needed to be rededicated as a place of Jewish memory nonetheless. The Nazis, who used this synagogue as a stable for their horses, had

pushed aside the pews and the bimah, where the rabbi reads the Torah. How ironic it was, I thought, that the machine of Nazism that had murdered and destroyed Jews and Jewish property in Poland had chosen to leave Kazimierz intact as a kind of memorial, a ghostly museum to nine hundred years of Jewish culture in Kraków.

As I had previously noticed, the Nazis had ripped down the Star of David from the synagogue's steeple. The United Jewish Appeal had a gold Star of David specially created for the Postepowa and had it brought to Kraków to be reinstalled by Rabbi Ronald Sobel of Temple Emanuel in New York during the concert. At intermission the audience gathered outside in the dark night and listened silently as the Rabbi said the prayers of reinstallation. The floodlights that had so startled me as I arrived, illuminating the armored personnel carriers as they ringed the synagogue, now served as the stark lighting for this ceremony. Having a military presence there lent our ceremony a very odd aspect as prayers were recited for the reconsecration of the star on this Jewish house of worship.

After we all reentered the sanctuary, Czeslaw Jakubowicz, wearing a brown Polish *czapka* instead of a yarmulke, rose and spoke to the audience. As he looked around at the huge crowd that filled the Postepowa to the bursting point, he gave me a look as if to say, I guess you pulled it off. His talk was simple and direct, welcoming one and all to this synagogue, a vital part of his fragile domain.

Then Father Fidelus, Cardinal Macharski's secretary, read a letter from the Archbishop, which expressed His Eminence's regret at not attending our concert. It was a letter which quoted extensively from words of Pope John Paul, honoring the spirit of reconciliation between Jews and Catholics, the very goal we had striven mightily for on that night.

Finally, unexpectedly, a member of the audience rose and asked permission to speak. It was Father Stanislaw Musial, a deputy editor of the *Catholic Weekly*, where the Pope himself had maintained very strong ties. Dressed in simple Jesuit garb, Father Musial was not a high official of the Church but a quiet man of powerful intellect, well known in Kraków circles, Catholic and Jewish alike. His request came

out of the blue, but I had come to know Father Musial well during my time in Kraków. He had become a friend. I was only too happy for him to say his peace. And peace is indeed what he intoned.

"Forty-five years ago a tragedy occurred on Polish soil like the world had never seen. Our Jewish brothers and sisters, who had lived among us for hundreds of years, were torn from us before our eyes. The Lord knows what dangers we Poles faced if we lifted a hand to help. But some of us did. They are Christian heroes, what are called in Israel the 'Righteous Among the Nations.' Many sadly did not. They feared for their lives and the lives of their families in our Polish homeland, which was under terrible siege. For the heroes, they sought no reward. They received none on this earth. Their reward is in God. For the others, who could have done much more—in this I include myself and my family—we ask your forgiveness, although we know you do not ask it of us.

"If I may, I will finish with this very short prayer. It is one that is said by Christians and by Jews alike:

"May the Lord Bless you and keep you. May he cause his countenance to shine upon you. And may he give you Peace. Shalom. Amen."

Then there was silence. Tears ran down many faces. Those of Jews and Catholics alike. It was a powerful statement, and one which clearly came from the heart. Father Musial had expressed our atonement or, as I have always believed it, our "at-one-ment" with the spirit of the physically absent Pope John Paul. However, the heart and soul of His Holiness was clearly present with all of us in the Templ Synagogue that night.

The performance of the Eroica Symphony, which we played after those deeply felt words of Father Musial, was one of the most powerfully motivated I've ever done. The Marcia Funebre, or Funeral March, the symphony's heroic slow movement, seemed to memorialize all the victims of World War II, and the millions who lost their lives on Polish soil. The finale, with its stirring and uplifting close, expressed our musical wish for a new beginning in the tortured relations between our two faith communities.

Some weeks later, I went to Rome and saw Monsignor Dziwisz. He had a smile on his face and said, "It was really wonderful, wasn't it?" And I didn't even have to ask what he was referring to. I also didn't need to know what had happened to Cardinal Lustiger. For me, understanding the relationship between Kraków's *Tygodnik Powszechny* (*Catholic Weekly*) and the Pope, and knowing of the warm friendship between its deputy editor and His Holiness, I was sure that although the Pope had not penned the words of Father Musial, he had most certainly inspired them. The fruit of that most special meeting that I had had in the Vatican with Cardinal Lustiger and the Pontiff was revealed in those extraordinary words, which had given such meaning to our concert in the Templ Synagogue.